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A Review of the Work
of the
American Antiquarian Society
(1907-1917)

BY
WALDO LINCOLN

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OF THE AMERICAN ANTIQUARIAN SOCIETY
FOR OCTOBER, 1917.

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A REVIEW OF THE WORK OF THE AMERICAN ANTIQUARIAN SOCIETY

In making the Council Report for this meeting of October, 1917, the writer completes his tenth year as President, and it therefore seems an appropriate time to review the work of the Society and the advance of its library and collections during the ten year period.

From 1812 to 1831 the number of members was unlimited, no distinction was made between resident and non-resident members, and many gentlemen were elected who never qualified. From 1831, when the number of members was first fixed, until 1907, active membership was limited to one hundred and forty. In April, 1907, this number was increased to one hundred and seventy-five, where it still remains. In October, 1907, there were one hundred and thirty-five active members, representing twenty-two States and Territories of the Union, and twenty-four foreign members representing eleven countries. There are today one hundred and seventy-four active members from twenty-six States and Territories, and thirty foreign members from fifteen countries. In 1907, ninety-eight members were residents of New England, or 72 per cent; today one hundred and four are residents of New England, or 60 per cent. Of the ninety-eight New England members in 1907 eighty were from Massachusetts, or 59 per cent, and thirty from Worcester, or 22 per cent. Today eighty-five are from Massachusetts, or 49 per cent, and twenty-eight from Worcester, or 16 per cent, showing a noteworthy broadening in membership.

The Society's invested and interest-bearing endowment in 1907 was \$218,902.07; of which \$60,000 was due to a partial payment, during the preceding financial year, of the legacy of Mr. Stephen Salisbury; and the non-productive real estate was valued at \$70,000. The next year the interest-bearing endowment was increased \$149,500 by the payment of the balance of the Salisbury legacy. In October, 1917 the interest-bearing endowment is \$319,264, and the actual cost of the non-productive real estate \$189,905.71; an increase of about \$100,000 in the former item and about \$120,000 in the latter or \$220,000 in all. Of this \$149,500 is due to the legacy of Mr. Salisbury and the balance, about \$70,000, to legacies and subscriptions received during the past ten years, which latter sum is the largest amount received in any ten consecutive years since the Society's foundation if Mr. Salisbury's legacy is excepted, and is largely due to the efforts of the present administration.

In October, 1849 the Society first began the regular publication of its Proceedings, two numbers being printed annually and three of these numbers making a volume until 1911, since which time the two numbers of each year have constituted a volume. The size of the numbers has increased from an average of one hundred and forty pages previous to 1911, to an average during the past three years of two hundred and thirty-seven pages, a part of this increase being due to comprehensive bibliographies which have become something of a specialty of the Society, and which it seems very desirable should so continue. Previous to 1909 the Society, in ninety-seven years, published eight volumes of Transactions, formerly called "Archaeologia Americana". Since then four more volumes have been published, besides a volume of the Proceedings from 1812 to 1849 containing five hundred and eighty-one pages. The reduced income, owing to the completion of the new building, and the gradually increasing cost of printing have not allowed

the publication of further volumes of Transactions, the Publishing Fund being less than sufficient to provide for the printing of the enlarged Proceedings.

In 1908 the Library was estimated to contain 99,000 volumes, including 7,000 volumes of newspapers, 4,000 almanacs, and 2,000 genealogies, besides about 135,000 pamphlets, a slight overestimate of all but the last item. The old building at Lincoln Square was filled to overflowing to such a degree that many volumes of newspapers were stored outside the building, and many departments of the Library were extremely inconvenient of access. The Library had practically reached its limit of growth for lack of room, which was unfortunate, since with the payment of Mr. Salisbury's legacy the Society was then, for the first time in many years, in possession of an income adequate to its wants. As something had to be done to provide not only for expected and desired growth, but also for the safety of the Library, land was bought and the present building completely finished and occupied early in 1911. The shelving in it was planned to accommodate 170,000 volumes including 12,000 volumes of newspapers, this being thought to be ample provision for the growth of from fifteen to twenty years, and the whole building was made absolutely fireproof. The cost of this unfortunately reduced the Society's income to a point which, while larger than before the receipt of Mr. Salisbury's legacy, was quite insufficient to provide for the purchase of rare and valuable specimens of Americana, and for the needful expenses incident to the care of a large reference library, the almost unrestricted use of which was, as ever, offered freely to the public. But for the last eight years a young and ambitious librarian, with a keen scent for an old book, and with an astonishing knowledge of values in the auction room, has been able, in spite of an inadequate income, to fill the newspaper stack to overflowing and to make the shelving for other volumes to appear in need of early enlargement.

The growth of the Library as a whole, considering the money spent, has been phenomenal, and some of the departments have been raised from comparative insignificance to a high rank among collections of Americana. By actual count there are now on the shelves 128,728 volumes and 192,058 pamphlets, an increase since 1908 of thirty and forty-two per cent respectively.

COUNT OF LIBRARY, OCTOBER, 1917

	VOLUMES	PAMPHLETS
General collection	36,205	2,000
Spanish Americana	2,170	810
Civil War and slavery	1,909	1,630
Imprints	3,925	11,500
Local history	7,497	820
Genealogical	2,518	
Reference books	1,011	242
Mather library	729	
Mather tracts	463	
Bibles	672	
Prayer books	260	
Hymn books	675	
Music books	808	
U. S. Government documents	13,500	21,860
State documents	6,553	3,200
Town documents	1,040	15,050
American documents	426	711
Periodicals	13,632	900
Directories	3,812	
Almanacs and registers	800	8,909
Legal books	510	
School books	10,120	130
Miscellaneous volumes	5,048	
Atlases	355	
Literary catalogues	323	3,526
Sale catalogues	140	14,450
Bound volumes of Pamphlets	1,161	
College material	970	22,730
Speeches and addresses		37,740
American and local societies	410	34,000
Railroad reports		3,500
Guides and time tables		1,900
Miscellaneous pamphlets		6,650
Newspapers	10,086	
Total	128,728	192,058

The above summary has been counted and arranged by classes, as the books are grouped on the shelves. In some of the groups, however, the number of volumes given does not show the full strength of the collection, as many titles may be included in another group. The general collection, for instance, includes reference books, imprints, Spanish-Americana, and other classes of books.

In the special line of American imprints previous to 1820, the Library contained in 1907 about 25,000 out of an estimated total of 75,000 titles. There have since been acquired 11,824 titles, so that today the Library has very nearly one-half of the whole number. The majority of these recent acquisitions are, of course, of no great value except from a bibliographical and historical point of view, but among the most noteworthy are:

The three editions of the Saur Bible published at Germantown; the "Blutige Schau-Platz" of 1748, a splendid production of the Ephrata Press; and the "Zionitischer Weyrauch-Hügel," 1739, the first book printed by Christopher Saur.

A perfect copy of "The Laws, Statutes, Ordinances and Constitutions of the City of New York," 1763, with rubricated preliminary page.

The "Civil, Military and Ecclesiastical Register of New Hampshire" of 1772. This belongs to the almanac collection and is exceedingly rare.

"Abridgment of Military Discipline," Boston, 1690, the first work of a military nature printed in the United States.

Besides these about 100 imprints previous to 1775, unknown to bibliographers, have been secured, and sixteen works by Cotton Mather and four by Increase Mather have been added to a collection previously surpassed by no other library, and the collection of American Bibles has been trebled, making it one of the three best in the country.

Over five hundred genealogies have been obtained, and of books on New England local history about

two hundred volumes have been added to what was previously a very good collection, making it today practically complete, while so many county and town histories outside of New England have been obtained as to make that collection, which in 1907 was hardly worthy of notice, the best in New England and among the best six in the United States.

The Society has now one of the finest collections of American periodicals to be found anywhere, being especially strong in initial numbers and in unusual publications.

There are over four thousand city and town directories in the Library, covering the whole United States, whereas formerly the Society possessed few outside of Massachusetts.

Through the kindness of Hon. Charles G. Washburn and Congressman Winslow the Library has been restored to the list of recipients of Government publications, from which it had been inadvertently removed in 1906, and has, probably, the most complete collection of government imprints outside of Washington.

For several years Miss Alice W. Kurtz, a young American woman, travelled through Mexico and Guatemala, seeking for rare imprints of those countries. Through her the Society has been able to obtain, at very reasonable cost, a really remarkable number of those imprints, a collection especially strong in the *vocabularios* and *artes* of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, besides many newspapers of the nineteenth century.

Ten years ago the Library owned almost no catalogues of book dealers or of book auction sales, while today it has practically complete files of the catalogues of American book auction houses, many of them being priced and in the case of important sales with the names of buyers inserted. It has about ninety per cent of the catalogues of American book dealers and a very large proportion of the English catalogues. The collection contains over fourteen thousand pieces, and in connection with the author cat-

atalogue of the Congressional Library, of which the Society is a depository, furnishes a mine of bibliographical information which is frequently used by correspondents, and is invaluable to the library staff.

By the generosity of Mr. Charles H. Taylor, Jr., the Library now has over one thousand titles on American journalism, forming a notable collection on that interesting and important subject.

Over fifty-three hundred almanacs have been added in the last ten years to the four thousand formerly owned by the Society, making this the largest and best collection of American almanacs in the United States. Owing to the ample room provided in the new building the almanacs are now conveniently shelved and systematically arranged.

The collection of American school-books, which was of unusual merit in 1907, has since been more than doubled, now numbers ten thousand volumes, and is of very great importance for the study of education.

Except through the generosity of the New England Historic Genealogical Society, in depositing its collection of maps with this Society, no large addition has been made in this department, but the greatest improvement to be noted here is the alphabetical arrangement of the maps in the steel cases provided for them in the Map and Print Room, which facilitates their being consulted and preserves them from destruction. The same may be said of the broadsides, prints, photographs, and miscellaneous objects belonging to the Society, which are now not only much safer, but so much more easy of access as to make them seem, though not materially more numerous than before, almost new possessions. Among these miscellaneous objects may be mentioned a collection of over nineteen hundred specimens of the copper tokens issued during the Civil War, which was secured in 1914 through the liberality of a member, the Society possessing up to that time a very few varieties.

The gift of Mrs. Emma De F. Morse, in 1913, of the remarkable collection of American historical pottery, is too recent and important to have been forgotten by the members. It comprises 218 varieties of dark blue Staffordshire ware and 105 other pieces all with American views, many of great rarity and interest.

Through the generosity and continuing labor of the Rev. Herbert E. Lombard, the Society now possesses a collection of American book-plates of notable interest and value. Mr. Lombard presented the Library with his own collection, and has since been devoted to its increase so that, with the purchase a year ago of the Terry book-plates, the Society, which in 1907 owned practically none, now owns more than ten thousand of these samples of the engraver's art.

Several specimens of the work of Paul Revere, some of them heretofore unknown, have been purchased in the last eight years and the Library now has nearly every known print by this interesting engraver.

The increase of newspapers has been most remarkable; 2,534 bound volumes and 118,917 unbound numbers, equal to about 1,200 volumes, have been secured. Most of these date before 1870, though perhaps one-fifth are current publications, the Society preserving and binding about thirty-five modern newspapers each year. The greatest improvement in the newspaper files has been in the years from 1820 to 1850, in which period the Library was weakest in 1907, but over five thousand issues have been obtained previous to 1800. The most important files secured are:

Washington Globe, 1832-1863; Washington Star, 1853-1865; True Flag, 1852-1886; Arkansas Gazette, 1820-1849; Newport Mercury, 1800-1850; Providence Gazette, 1780-1825; New York Shipping and Commercial List, 1827-1860; Missouri Gazette, 1809-1818; New York Atlas, 1838-1872; Windham Herald, 1792-1805; Cincinnati Gazette, 1844-1877; Wisconsin Argus and Wisconsin State Journal, together covering the years from 1844 to 1898; Pawtucket Gazette, 1839-

1909; Concord Statesman, 1837-1866; New Hampshire Gazette, 1799-1848; Portsmouth Journal, 1821-1903; Pennsylvania Packet, 1783-1790; and the two remarkable files of the Alexandria Gazette, 1800-1910, and the Reading Adler, 1796-1913, both of these being office files and practically complete, each covering more than one hundred years.

A very large and valuable collection of South American papers has also been secured, partly by purchase and partly by exchange with Harvard University; and files of papers published in the West Indies and forming a remarkable collection of the newspapers of the Windward and Leeward Islands, was given to the Library in 1913. Since that time a successful effort has been made to acquire the Trinidad newspapers of the last thirty years, so that, with but few breaks, the Library possesses the local news of some one of those islands since 1790, a period of more than one hundred and twenty-five years.

While not many additions have been made to the manuscripts, mention must not be omitted of the "Records of the Council for New England," presented by the late Frederick Lewis Gay in 1912, on the occasion of the centennial celebration of the Society. This gift was a great compliment to the Society and its officers, showing Mr. Gay's appreciation of the value of the Library, of the care taken for its preservation and of his confidence in the continuation of that care. It is the aim of the present administration to deserve that confidence, in the hope that other collectors, whether members of the Society or not, may follow Mr. Gay's example, and honor the Society by entrusting to it their gems of early Americana, so that, safe from the dangers and vicissitudes of private ownership, these may be preserved for the benefit of the future students of American history.

WALDO LINCOLN,
For the Council.







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